EAST AFRICA Regional Food Security Outlook — Through March 2009

- Fifteen to eighteen million people in East Africa are currently highly or extremely food insecure, including over one million malnourished children, due to below-normal rains, poor crop and pasture production, civil conflict and insecurity, abnormally high food prices, and livestock diseases. Populations most affected are in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti (Figure 1). These conditions could deteriorate if ongoing interventions are not enhanced to assure timeliness, appropriate targeting, and sufficient access, and if rains do not perform well through the end of the October-December season.

- In the most likely scenario (Figure 2), near-normal October-December rains will ease pasture shortages, replenish water resources, and improve livestock body conditions, milk production, and pastoral terms of trade in affected areas, particularly in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti. In addition, government and inter-agency efforts to control livestock diseases are expected to reduce animal deaths. Despite expected favorable rains, overall pastoral food security will not improve significantly during the January-March period, due to significant asset losses, including livestock death during past seasons and food prices that will likely remain above normal levels. Favorable conditions during the July-September cropping season in key areas of central, eastern, and northern Ethiopia and southern Sudan have raised harvest prospects in these areas. Food security in Tanzania and most of Uganda is expected to remain stable. In Kenya, production deficits are possible, though they could be addressed through cross-border trade. In this scenario, child malnutrition will ease among pastoralists, where its prevalence is high, due to prospects of improved milk production, and the overall population requiring emergency assistance is expected to decline marginally.

- In the worst-case scenario (Figure 3), below-normal October-December rains would result in marginal, short-lived improvements in pasture and water availability in pastoral areas and crop failure in agropastoral areas. This would make the January-March dry season more severe than normal, and would reduce prospects for improvements in malnutrition and overall food security. Another harsh dry season could also increase resource-based conflict in pastoral areas and lead to increased livestock deaths, further impoverishing pastoral households. If existing livestock diseases are not controlled, particularly in Kenya and Uganda, they will further erode pastoralists' income and assets. In this scenario, the population requiring emergency assistance will remain unchanged or increase.

Current food security situation

Current conditions indicate high or extreme food insecurity in lowland pastoral and agropastoral areas of central and southern Somalia, Djibouti, northeastern

Figure 1. Current estimated food security conditions, September, 2008

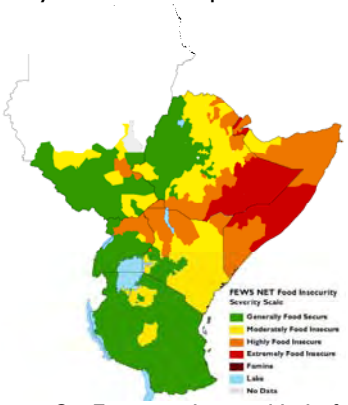


Figure 2. Estimated most likely food security scenario, January-March 2009

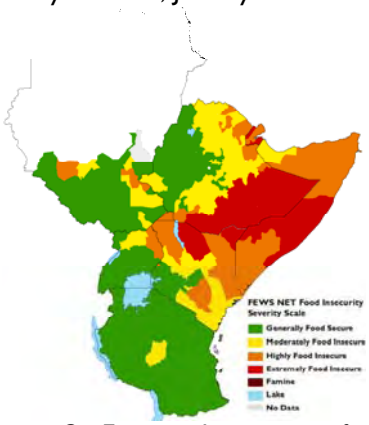
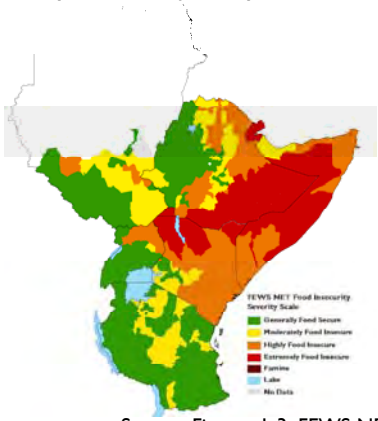


Figure 3. Estimated worst case food security scenario, January-March 2009



Source, Figures 1-3: FEWS NET

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Uganda, southeastern Ethiopia, and most northern districts of Kenya. These conditions are a consequence of a third consecutive below-normal rainy season from March-May 2008, civil conflict and insecurity, livestock disease, and abnormally high food prices. In contrast, food security in most of the region's cropping highlands has been largely stable, with some moderate food insecurity. This stability is largely due to near-normal rains during March-May and July-September 2008.

In Somalia, about 3.25 million people, over 40 percent of the population, face high or extreme food insecurity, especially in the south-central regions, and about 180,000 children are severely or moderately malnourished, according to UNICEF. This year, poor rains and civil conflict during the main *gu* season (April-June) led to cereal production totals that constituted only 58 percent of the long-term average (1995-2007), and 80 percent of the five-year average (2003-07). According to Somalia's Food Security Analysis Unit, harvest totals over the last five years have progressively declined, leaving agropastoral groups in the country among the most vulnerable. No substantial crop production is expected in these areas until the April-June 2009 rainy season, though if ongoing October-December rains persist and civil insecurity diminishes, some small-scale rain-fed agricultural production and improved irrigated production is possible. However, given high international food and fuel prices, and prevailing serious market disruptions due to continued civil insecurity, it is unlikely that small-scale production and food imports will make up for the shortage of domestic supplies. In addition, above-average food prices and civil conflict and insecurity in central and southern areas of the country continue to restrict market access, increase destitution, and cause widespread population displacement.

In Ethiopia, the failure of the root crop harvest in early 2008 in parts of Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR), and the near-failure of the *belg (*March-May) rains in most parts of the country that depend on them (SNNPR, Oromia, and Somali regions), also led to a deterioration of food security in these areas. Harvests from the *belg* rains are a critical source of food for most people in these areas, and extremely poor crop production, as well as continued above-normal food prices, increased the number of people facing high or extreme food insecurity from about two million at the beginning of 2008 to over six million currently, with another 5.7 million people being assisted through the productive safety net program. In Somali Region, civil insecurity and market restrictions further exacerbated these conditions. While the start of green harvests in parts of the country that produce crops during the June-September main production season has modestly improved food security in highly and extremely food insecure southern and southeastern areas, most people there remain highly or extremely food insecure. Levels of acute malnutrition above the World Health Organization's emergency threshold continue to be reported in Oromia, SNNP, Tigray, Amhara, and Somali regions, and shortfalls of food and non-food assistance, due to resource constraints, are impeding response efforts to improve the nutrition status of children.

In other parts of the region, civil insecurity along the border between northwestern Kenya and northeastern Uganda impedes pastoralists' access to grazing and water sources and markets. In addition, increased incidences of *Peste de Petits Ruminants* (PPR) – a virus that typically affects sheep and goats – in northeastern Uganda and pastoral areas of Kenya is causing high rates of small stock mortality, undermining pastoralists' purchasing power, and reducing their food access. The virus has killed an estimated 25 percent of sheep and goats in Uganda's Karamoja Region, while in Kenya it has caused losses estimated at KSH one billion (including livestock death and income losses). The Government of Kenya has reportedly received more than half of the required vaccinations for 13 million at-risk animals. In Karamoja Region, in addition to PPR, below-normal rains, poor crop production, and civil insecurity have caused high levels of food insecurity for over 700,000 people. Vaccination campaigns against PPR are also underway in this region. As a result of the virus and conflict, livestock movements outside infected areas are restricted and causing unusual concentrations of animals, further increasing the risk of disease and degrading available land resources.

Throughout the region, food prices are above normal levels for this time of year, although there are signs of stabilization or decreases since August 2008 in countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, in response to increasing local supplies from harvests. For Somalia, prices are stabilizing or decreasing because of increasing import capacity following the end of the May-August rough-seas season, though increased piracy threatens this improved import capacity. However, even in areas where prices are decreasing, the decreases so far remain largely insignificant. Without substantial increases in wages and income, overall food access has decreased in many parts of the region, especially among poor, net food buyers in urban centers and pastoral areas.

Reasons for high prices are both endogenous (e.g., poor production, market disruptions) and exogenous (e.g., high fuel and imported food prices). Djibouti and Somalia import most of their food and non-food essentials, and are relatively more affected by increases in international prices. Djibouti, Kenya, and, to a lesser extent, Somalia also import significant amounts of cereals from neighboring countries like Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda. However, some of these countries (Tanzania, Ethiopia, and more recently Kenya) have put in place cereal export bans to prevent further reduction in local supplies and to prevent increases in local prices. Though unofficial cereal flows continue, the bans have restricted the free flow of food commodities from surplus to deficit areas within the region, and have contributed to deteriorating food security in some areas.

These regional factors, combined with country-specific issues, have left 15-18 million people highly or extremely food insecure in East Africa. In addition, UNICEF information from Somalia, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Djibouti, Eritrea, and southern Sudan indicates that an estimated 193,500 children under five are severely malnourished and 922,000 are moderately malnourished. The majority of these children are in Ethiopia and Somalia.

Most-likely food security scenario, January–March 2009

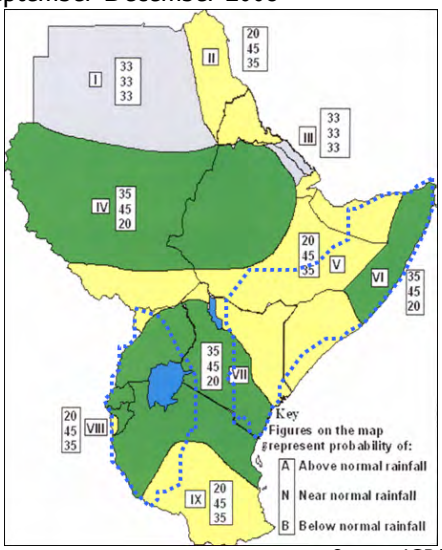
The climate forecast for October-December indicates near-normal to below-normal rains are likely in the pastoral and agropastoral areas of northern Kenya, central and southern Somalia, southern Tanzania, and southern parts of Ethiopia (Figure 4, yellow-shaded areas). Prior to the ongoing season, many of the region's pastoral areas experienced two or three consecutive below-normal rainy seasons, and large populations within these areas currently face high or extreme food insecurity. Near-normal rainfall in these areas would lead to pasture regeneration, replenishment of water resources, and favorable conditions for crop production in cropping areas during this season.

Despite expected improvements if near-normal rains prevail, it is unlikely that food security conditions in these areas will recover significantly in the outlook period, due to high levels of asset loss in some areas, drought, and disease. Prevailing high levels of malnutrition, high food prices, and poor pastoral terms of trade also mean that continued interventions and several normal to above-normal rainy seasons are required for recovery. Even if rains perform near normal levels this season, early depletion of pasture is expected in Somalia, especially in south-central areas where previous seasonal rains were below normal. Successive poor rains, extensive livestock migration, and concentrations of livestock around remaining water points in the worst affected pastoral areas of the region have worsened already poor environmental conditions, further reducing prospects for vegetation recovery during the minor October-December rains.

In Djibouti the *karma/sougum* rains (July-September) largely failed, although light rains did fall toward the end of the season. The poor season, the third in a row, has affected the mainly pastoral inland areas, causing livestock death and abnormal migrations, and leaving the population in need of emergency support. No significant rains are expected in these areas until the March-May 2009 season. Food security for coastal pastoralists is likely to deteriorate further as the outlook period progresses.

In most of Uganda, northern Tanzania, northeastern Ethiopia, and southern Kenya, near-normal to above-normal October-December rains are

Figure 4. Consensus outlook forecast for September-December 2008



Source: ICPAC

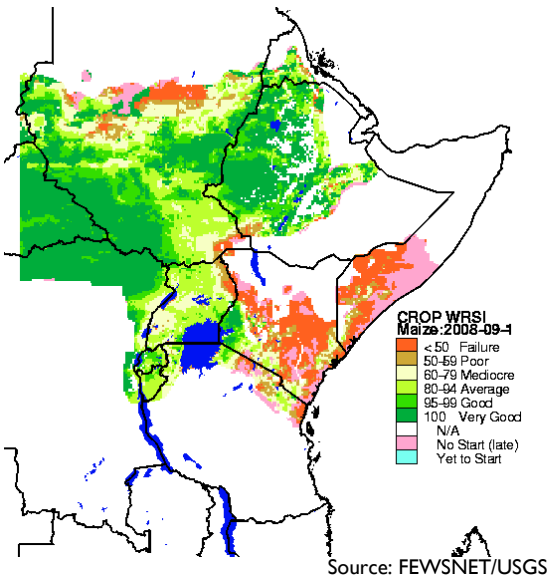
Table 1. Most-likely scenario assumptions and indicators

- Near-normal to below-normal October-December rains continue in pastoral areas
- Continued conflict and civil insecurity result in market disruption and displacement, especially in Somalia and parts of southeastern Ethiopia
- Control measures for PPR reduce incidences of infection but are insufficient to fully address needs
- Cereal export bans persist in Ethiopia and Tanzania

expected (Figure 4, green-shaded areas). As a result, stable food security conditions are expected in Uganda and Tanzania during the outlook period, but cereal export bans imposed by some of the countries will continue to stifle normal cross-border trade flows that are crucial to maintaining regional food security. Food production in Uganda in 2008 is expected to be near normal, while in Kenya, harvests of 2.6 million MT (about 240,000 MT less than the long-term average) are expected. In Tanzania, food stocks from the 2007/08 harvests could decline by the end of the outlook period, due in part to high demand for informal trade, and prices could start to rise again. In pastoral regions of Kenya and northwestern Uganda, PPR will likely continue to affect small stock. Though significant control measures by governments and partners are expected to reduce incidences of the virus, it will likely persist during the forecast period.

Favorable cropping conditions over northwestern Ethiopia, western Kenya, and southern Sudan indicate prospects for a good harvest from these areas (Figure 5). However, there are fears that current heavy rains could destroy some harvests, particularly in western Kenya.

Figure 5. Current crop conditions, September 2008



Source: FEWSNET/USGS

Overall, nominal cereal prices are expected to decline in response to increased availability as harvests come in during the October-December period in Kenya, Ethiopia, parts of Uganda, and Sudan. But, prices are expected to remain above the five-year average despite seasonal decreases, due to market disruptions caused by insecurity in some countries, fuel and transportation costs that will likely remain high, and possible market speculation fueled by export bans. Somalia and Djibouti, which are highly dependent on imports from international markets, will continue experiencing high prices, likely increasing the number of food insecure people during the outlook period. Though, even in these countries, prices may level off or decline slightly.

Most likely scenario - Food security implications

The October-December forecast is particularly relevant where rains contribute 40-50 percent of annual cumulative rainfall. This includes pastoral areas of southern Ethiopia, eastern Kenya, most of Somalia, and agro-pastoral areas of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and the southeastern lowlands and parts of western Kenya (Figure 4, blue highlighted areas). Pastoral areas, with the exception of northeastern Kenya, have experienced at least three consecutive below-normal rainy seasons, degrading water and pasture availability. While rangeland and water conditions will likely improve during the October-December period as a result of expected favorable rainfall, poor environmental conditions caused by successive below-average seasons in many pastoral areas prior the current rains may prevent full recovery of grazing resources, and rangeland conditions could decline faster than normal. This would, in turn, cause earlier migration of livestock in the January-March dry season, causing a decline in body conditions, productivity, and prices, and negatively impacting child nutrition and herder incomes.

Although October-December rains are expected to be near normal and improve production and food supply, poor market access, high food prices, civil insecurity, and transboundary livestock diseases are likely to persist and will reduce food access, especially for poor urban and pastoral households. The overall number of food insecure people in the region is expected to decrease, but a significant number of people will remain food insecure during the forecast period in the most likely scenario. Areas that may see improved food availability by early 2009 due to expected improved production include marginal farming zones in southern Kenya, agropastoral areas of southern Somalia, and most other pastoral areas across the region. However, highly market-dependent groups, including the poor in major urban centers, will likely remain at current levels of food insecurity or realize only marginal improvements.

Worst- case scenario, January-March 2009

In the worst-case scenario, below-normal rains will materialize in pastoral areas, resulting in only marginal and short-lived improvements in pasture and water conditions. These resources would then be depleted faster than normal, resulting in a severe January-March dry season. This would accelerate deterioration of livestock body conditions and production and reduce livestock prices. Drier-than-normal conditions could also increase resource-based conflicts, result in high rates of livestock death, destitution, and population displacement.

Table 2. Worst–case scenario assumption and indicators

- Below normal October-December rainfall in pastoral areas and average rains in highland cropping areas;
- Continued civil insecurity and displacement in south-central Somalia;
- PPR disease poorly controlled with inadequate access to vaccinations
- Food and fuel prices remain high or increase further
- Food entitlement deficits persist or worsen for already food insecure groups

Under this scenario, food prices could remain near current high levels, although reductions in global prices and upcoming harvests could result in marginal declines. Given these factors, and, if PPR is not controlled, food security could deteriorate rapidly from current levels and pre-famine conditions could emerge in pastoral areas during the January-March outlook period. It is recommended that contingency measures be put in place to prevent more livestock deaths and in case of a need for increased humanitarian assistance.

Conclusion

Some 15-18 million people in East Africa are currently highly or extremely food insecure due to factors including civil insecurity and conflict, transboundary livestock diseases, drought, and abnormally high market prices. The presence of nearly one million malnourished children reflects a situation that could deteriorate further if urgent measures are not taken to assure appropriate resource transfers and social protection programs.